

## **Indian Life**

Archaeological evidence indicates that Indians were living in North Carolina at least 10,000 years ago. For centuries before European contact, these native people lived in harmony with the natural environment, taking no more from the land than they needed to survive. Individual ownership of land was completely alien to them. Fishing, hunting and farming provided food for their tribal groups.

### **Early Encounters**

Indians of the Virginia and North Carolina coast were hosts to the first English-speaking explorers and settlers. Initial contact between these peoples was generally peaceful and friendly. The natives taught the newcomers fishing and agricultural techniques, introduced them to corn and tobacco cultivation, demonstrated methods of land clearing and showed them efficient use of the forest's bounty. White settlers exchanged manufactured goods for the Indian's knowledge. Too late did the Indians realize that they had sacrificed their self-reliance for the white man's conveniences. The European concept of land was total possession, not sharing. Hostile feelings developed between the Indians and the settlers, setting the stage for continued clashes.

### **Coastal Plains Indians**

At this time, the coastal plains Indians of North Carolina numbered approximately 35,000 or about 30 tribes geographically separated by linguistic groups. Along the northeastern and central coast were the Algonquians. To the south resided those of Siouan lineage. And to the west lived the Iroquoian-related Tuscarora. For these Indian tribes, early contact with white men often was followed by early extinction. Among the causes were warfare and disease. By 1710, the coastal Indian population had dwindled to no more than 5,000.

### **Tuscarora War**

The Tuscarora War in 1711 marked the last significant effort of the eastern Indians to halt the white tidal wave that was sweeping them off the land. For two years the Tuscarora fought the many military expeditions sent against them, but in 1713 they suffered a major defeat which broke their power forever.

### **Indian Removal Bill**

By the 1760s, white settlement had reached the mountain foothills of North Carolina, the home of the Cherokee. In 1838, under the authority of the Indian Removal Bill, nearly 17,000 Cherokee were forcibly removed from their ancestral home. Nearly one-fourth of the Cherokee resisted removal, however, and it is from this nucleus that the Eastern Band of the Cherokee was formed.

### **Present-Day Tribes**

By the mid-1800s, European settlement had spread across the central piedmont. Small tribes fled before the invasion and most joined kinsmen in eastern and southern North Carolina, southern Virginia or South Carolina. It is from these last surviving groups that the present-day, state-recognized tribes of North Carolina -- the Coharie, Haliwa-Saponi, Indians of Person County, Lumbee, Meherrin and Waccamaw-Siouan -- trace their ancestry.

### **Little Recorded History in 1700s**

Little history is recorded regarding the surviving eastern Indians between the early 1700s and the early 1800s. However, it must be remembered that for these Indians, survival depended largely on their ability to withstand the state's policy of forced anonymity for their kind and their ability to accept their designated place in the white social order.